CLAIMS

It is claimed:

1.   A method of generating a distributed business transaction in response to a directory assistance request from a telephone customer using a computer network comprising:

maintaining a database including a plurality of directory listings, wherein each listing is associated with a referral phone number, at least one keyword and a bid amount a directory listing owner is willing to pay for a single telephone referral;

receiving a directory assistance request in the form of a keyword from the customer;

identifying the directory listings having keyword terms generating a match with the request;

ordering the identified directory listings into a phone number result list in accordance with the values of the bid amounts for the identified directory listings;

selecting one of the directory listings;

generating a paid referral business transaction and associating it with the listing owner's advertising account;

generating one or a plurality of derivative business transactions to execute the business processes involved in the referral transaction.

2. A system and method for processing a distributed business transaction in response to a directory assistance request from a telephone customer using a computer network comprising:

encapsulating the business transaction parameters in a separate transaction container that can be passed as a complete package to disparately located business transactions;

sending the transaction container to one or a plurality of business processes;

after executing the business process, including the resulting system state as the transaction context for the particular business process;

adding successive transaction contexts to the transaction container in such a way that the sequence of initial state, desired operation, input parameters and resulting state fully describes each step of the multi-step distributed transaction.